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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



DEAR EDITOR: I was very much interested in Dr. Park's remarks published last month, instructing the nurses to be business-like. It is the first time I have heard the nurses addressed on this all-important matter. I venture to write a little more on the subject—also on the subject of loyalty one to another. I have always admired, even when spellbound and speechless, the loyalty of physicians to each other, and have always been astounded and surprised at the lack of any sense of business methods or loyalty that some nurses possess. I regret to say that some of it is due to their training or lack of training. The lack of loyalty, of course, is more the fault of character or selfishness. Time and time again, I have known nurses, to allow doctors to criticise other nurses—even their intimate friends—without making any effort, which one would naturally do, to defend the absent. Nay, more, they even tell things of the absent that do not reflect well on themselves, for the simple reason that what is said of the individual nurse reflects on the whole profession.

Dear sister nurses, do be loyal, one to another, at least with the physicians and families. This is no new doctrine. It is carrying out the commandment of God, to be charitable,—“Love one another.”

To come back to the subject of being business-like: charge what you please in reason, but be business-like about it. Personally, I think some understanding about fixed rates for laundry, for week work and day work would be desirable. One word more I wish to add, about your duty to yourself, and again, to each other: Do not overwork on your cases! Do not sit up night and day until you can neither eat nor sleep from fatigue. There are plenty of nurses, plenty of hospitals, a great many district nurses for the poor. No one need overwork, and above all, be loyal and true!

JULIA H. FISHER,  
Boston, Massachusetts.

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DEAR EDITOR: Perhaps many nurses do not know of “The Cantslip Bathmat and Rim Grips.” May I therefore beg space for a few words in recommendation of the same?

They are made of white rubber, perfectly sanitary and very simple. The mat gives a firm foothold to the bottom of the tub, while the rim grips assure a firm hold on the rim, while getting in and out of the bath. I have found them a very great help in bathing patients. Circulars giving particulars and prices can be had of the Manufacturers, 56 Pine Street, New York City.

EMMA DUENSING.  
Graduate German Hospital, New York.

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DEAR EDITOR: While two nurses stood in line for the President's New Year reception on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House with a throng of people passing, a loud voice called attention to a well-dressed woman with a strong face, who was endeavoring to force her friend, an elderly woman, in

between the people in line who had held their places for two hours, loudly exclaiming: "Story! it is no story. You men talk too much. I want you to know I am a Spanish War nurse; if you don't believe me I can show you my papers. You can ask the President. I'm a NURSE, a SPANISH WAR NURSE, and I have a perfect right to put my friend in this line any where I choose. I am a nurse, my name is Miss D——." While the crowd jeered and mocked, she went further along the line repeating her story. A police officer interfered in a very good-natured way and she offered to show him her papers as a Spanish War nurse, and also threatened to report him to the President if he did not make a place for her friend in the line.

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ONE OF THE WITNESSES.

DEAR EDITOR: It was my good fortune to hear a "talk" recently by Dr. McCormack, organizer for the American Medical Association.

If any nurse has the opportunity to hear him, by no means fail to do so. One reason that he gave for lack of proper coöperation among people of several professions, notably doctors and nurses, is the fact that they live segregated lives in large degree. Another is lack of uniform education and training in our special schools.

In an editorial in the December JOURNAL you ask: "what is the future of the alumnae association?" Here, again, let me quote a suggestion from him, viz.: that each association become a post-graduate school, each grade taking up special lines of study and meeting often enough to make the work of special benefit. In this way those who have become rusty in certain lines can keep brushed up. Several associations have already reported lecture courses, which are certainly a beginning along these lines.

As has been suggested, the whole nursing question becomes in the end one of evolution and the survival of the fittest. The day will surely come when our fees will in larger measure correspond to the finances of the patient, and at no long distant time. Then, too, will the question of trained *versus* untrained nurses find a solution.

Would it not pay the associated alumnae to put into the field a woman to do such work for the nurses as Dr. McCormack does for the physicians, which consists in putting new life into the old organization as much as it does in forming new associations?

Again I say, Hear this "talk" by Dr. McCormack if possible, for he presents the ethical, social, political, and educational phases of his subject in a masterly way and his lecture is brim full of food for nurses as well as doctors.

L. M. B., Sherman, Texas.

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DEAR EDITOR: Continuing the discussion on the regular army service there were, I am told, some two thousand nurses who served in the late war. They came from all sections and must certainly have been of average intelligence. Is it not possible that by them the government was "weighed in the balance and found wanting"? and that now it is simply "reaping what it has sown"? While changes have been effected, they can hardly be expected to erase the unfortunate impression of government methods and employees made upon the earlier nurses, and carried by them to their homes and associates. Some of my personal experience may bring out what I mean more clearly. At the Presidio, where I

was stationed, a woman physician was in charge as chief nurse. About the last of April or the first of May, 1899, measles broke out in the camps and another ward was opened for the use of these patients in the brick barracks, the new hospital not being completed. For several days Miss (Dr.)——, (she was advised to drop her title for obvious reasons), related at table how the contract surgeon of this ward was begging her for nurses for his patients who were desperately ill, several cases being complicated with pneumonia. In her elaborate manner, she would tell how she had refused because she had no nurses to spare. No nurses to spare! On the ward where I was at work there were two day nurses and one night nurse and very competent corps-men to assist them. The patients included two of three "lungers" and several convalescent dysentery cases from the Philippines, and the rest were "rookies" suffering from colds. I doubt if outside the first mentioned, there was a temperature over 100°. On the surgical ward no operations had been recently performed and the old cases were recovering. Their night nurse declared she hadn't a thing to do but give out a few cathartics and the breakfasts. She, too, had a fine corps-man, who could have easily managed alone, as could the corps-men on the ward previously mentioned, setting at least four nurses free to care for those men lying at death's door—and yet Miss (Dr.)—— had no available nurses! Finally the importunities of the surgeon prevailed and she sent me over there one afternoon. What a sight! Men covered with sweat and dust from the drill-ground had been put to bed unbathed by two of the most incompetent corps-men in the service—that is, barring the one on at night. Some of the temperatures were between 105° and 106°. One of these had his top sheet wound round and round his neck and was simply purple in the face. Everything was at sixes and sevens, and not a clean towel or change for the beds on the place. I had the surgeon sign a requisition for these articles. The property steward came over and told me he could not issue them. The only way was to turn in soiled articles which would be replaced with clean ones. There was nothing else to do but to strip the beds of sheets and pillow cases and the men of their night-shirts, and a queer looking ward I had in consequence until the baths were given and the clean bed-linen arrived.

At supper I asked Miss (Dr.)—— for a night nurse, hoping it would dawn on her where to get one. But my plea was in vain. So I asked for and obtained permission to remain on duty for the night. I did succeed in securing a very good corps-man, which was fortunate, as the regular one was hopelessly inefficient, half drunk, and slept most of the night. What a time we had! Six vomiting at once, others very delirious, one apparently dying, another with a violent chill followed by a fever of 106°, etc., etc. Relief came in the morning for a nurse had returned from her vacation and others arrived from the East. If I remember correctly, three men died in less than three days. In a short time, the linen closet was well stocked; but in a civil hospital I would have been promptly supplied without encountering "red tape," and the chief-nurse would have *been* a nurse who understood her business, and desperately ill patients would not have been neglected.

While in charge of a ward in the new hospital, an orderly presented himself before me announcing that the commanding officer wanted me in the tea-kitchen. As I appeared in the doorway, he fairly bellowed at me about the supply of eggs—there were too many; it could not be allowed; and what did

I mean by having them? I explained and then asked if the order for them was to be countermanded. The "Nò" in reply was given in an ordinary tone of voice. I returned to my work only to be summoned again, this time to the linen closet, where he yelled at me: "Don't you know the linen closet is no place for a wheeled chair?" It was a new one, and looking up from my writing one day when a patient was occupying it, I noticed one side sagged. On investigating, I found a nut was missing and the property steward, when asked for another, had none of that size, but would get one as soon as he could. In the meantime to save the chair from being badly broken, I had locked it up in the linen closet. "Shall I put it back in the ward?" Again the negative was mildly spoken. Another time he stalked into the ward and violently stormed at me for several minutes. It seems he had notified Miss (Dr.)—— to give an order to the head nurses and she had failed to do so in my case, and never having received or even heard of it, I had not carried it out.

A nurse on the surgical ward told me this commanding officer would sometimes walk into the ward and, beaming on the nurses, announce he had come to apologize for all the swearing at them he had done up to date.

I heard quite a number who had served in the East say they had encountered only one gentleman among the army surgeons, and in every instance the same captain doctor was the exception.

There is a certain arrogance about some of the army officials and an attitude towards the people in general of "Thou hast made us lords and canst not put us down," which is most unfortunate.

Many war nurses, accustomed to the methods which obtain in civil hospitals, could not but be unfavorably impressed with the lack of common sense, the oftentimes exasperating red-tape, and the want of courtesy on the part of the surgeons, which they found in army hospitals.

I do not wish to convey the impression that the army service should be shunned, for there is very much to recommend it. I am only trying to give what seemed to me an explanation of the nurses' apparent apathy.

L. L. HUDSON, Colorado Springs, Colo.

[The condition described by Miss Hudson existed she says about the first of May, 1899. Do they exist to-day? is the important question. Secretary Taft's letter to the legislature asking for discontinuance of contract Surgeons and for improvements in the medical service will be followed with interest by nurses who have served in the army.—Ed.]

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#### TO NEW YORK NURSES

THE nurses who ordered photographs at the Niagara Falls meeting of the New York State Nurses' Association and who have not received them, are requested to communicate with Mrs. Gustin Welch, 723 Main Street, Niagara Falls.